

THE LABOUR ORGANISER

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MONTH BY MONTH

THE INQUEST. The Inquest on the General Election still proceeds in every Labour journal, and in a good many others, not to mention the heaps of meetings where the matter is discussed. In 1931 the Movement was somewhat fortunate in having culprits to blame for the debacle but on the present occasion the truth is more unpalatable, for the fact must be faced that the rank and file have been more vocal during the last four years than during any period of the Party's history. But has this vocalism been the main form of activity?

* * *

SOME EVIDENCE. It is not so easy to pass the blame for the failures at the recent election on to the National Executive of the Labour Party, or the Parliamentary leaders. The latter have admittedly done well during their four years of uphill work in the Commons. The National E.C. in the main have been just plain men doing a plain duty and working hard and well. They have not been conspicuous in leadership any more than in error. In the main, the second team, for so it still seems to older Socialists, has played a good game. They can say to the Movement, in relation to successive campaigns and successive endeavours, "We have piped unto you and ye have not danced." It is this fact we think which more than explains the disappointment of the General Election.

* * *

THE CAMPAIGNS. Immediately after the General Election of 1931, the Party launched a million membership campaign. Four years have gone by, and the Movement is not yet half

way to the goal set before it four years ago. Later, organisation campaigns and conferences were held. Ideals of bigger, better and more powerful local organisations were put before the Movement and suggestions made on how to do it. The Movement has not yet complied. Youth walked across the stage, our perils and our paucity due to the absence of youth within the Party were exposed. There was a spasm, an endeavour, and some attempt at remedy. But the evil still remains that neither youth nor the children are important in the Party. The Movement, in its motherhood, has given us no end of stillborns, and of puny infants that have not lived. The mortality in youth branches has been enormous. The Victory for Socialism campaign came; that also was no conspicuous success. Do not all these things really account for the result of the General Election, which, after all, in respect of the vote polled, was really better than Labour deserved?

* * *

THE VERDICTS. And so if one pleases one might proceed to pass a verdict but we here won't do any such thing, because we have already heard of several verdicts—and the riders. One recommends more propaganda; another more work in the rural areas; another more agents; another more leaflets; another better candidates; another redistribution and electoral reform; and so on. Everybody has their nostrum. We only hope that the multitude of advisers nobody is going to be sufficiently influential to impose upon the National E.C. a course of action or of policy until advice and evidence has been taken all round. The Head Office has, we are aware, written to agents and candidates asking for their opinions and reports upon their con-

tests. This information will be invaluable. But even so, history is not written in a day, nor readable in a week. We ourselves believe it will be some time before all the lessons of the election will be perceivable, and it may be as well to wait for a clear view of the happenings before any decisions are taken, which might pledge the Movement either to great campaigns or new policies.

* * *

BACK-SEAT DRIVERS.

One of the misfortunes of the Labour Party of recent years has been that since 1931 it has been minus the wealth of leadership which it had before the split. Those who remained have got no younger, and the great leader who led the Party out of the debacle is no more. It is sometimes said that leaders are born and not made. It is more true to say that

the march of events, the opportunity, and training, produce the man. In our opinion Labour has not one, but several leaders in the making. The fact we desire to point to is that the peculiar circumstances of the past few years has afforded some opportunity to back-seat drivers to make their presence felt, and from various vantage points certain people have sought to usurp a power of direction to which they have no proper title. A strong leader would have put these people in their places. Equally, there is some tendency to-day for the Labour Party to become a very humble server of the T.U.C. However, important and influential Trades Unionism may be in the councils of Labour and vital to its hold on the country, the independence of the Party is even more vital. And the trend of events seems to indicate that there may some day arise an occasion for emphasizing this.

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ECHOES

FROM THE FIGHT

From various sources one gathers a strong impression that the recent election was fought at a lower average cost than any election in which Labour has been previously engaged since 1918.

We are not at all sure that this is matter for congratulation. In quite a number of constituencies so far from the above fact evidencing an economy due to increased efficiency, it reflected a poorness of effort, which resulted in a less vigorous fight at the polls. We have before us at this moment a list of several constituencies where the cost was less but where we are quite sure the quality of the work fell below the 1929 standard. In these places there were actually less workers, and a shortage of necessary election equipment.

The fact appears to be that the lessened expenditure in many places was due to unpreparedness—this after four years of warning! It is, however, perfectly true that some Labour Parties took a long time to recover from the 1931 debacle, and there have been many who could have heeded advice given to them to make proper financial preparation. It is not good in 1935 to hear of Parties commencing the election with nothing at all in their coffers, and there is really no excuse for this if Socialists really mean business. We incline to the opinion that a larger number of Labour Parties than usual found themselves in difficulties when settling up. What a commentary on that prosperity stunt! Seriously though, Labour workers should see to it that the election fund for the next election is opened and built up in ample time. Why not begin to build now?

But if some Parties were unable to balance their income and expenditure there have been other Parties which have made a profit out of the General Election. But please do not let anybody run away with the idea that we

are going to commend anybody for doing this. It is a commendable thing to run an election entirely within the computed cost, and to return a margin out of this. But such instances are not the cases we have in mind. When Parties have made £40, £50, £60 or even £100 profit, it is obvious that either insufficient has been spent during the contest (and we know this to be the case in some places), and that the fight has been unduly starved, or alternatively money has been received from quarters, such as the Labour Party, which ought to be returned to be spent on more necessitous areas. Big budget surpluses are ordinarily evidence of *bad* and not *good* finance. Parties who make a substantial profit out of their elections are open to the charge that they have received money for a certain purpose, and not so used it. On a future occasion they may suffer from the disinclination of people to subscribe to a fund when subscriptions are not really needed. The least such Parties can do is to at once bank every penny of surplus in a definite election account so ensuring that monies provided are retained for the purpose that was intended

The "return of election expenses" through a simple-looking form seems fruitful of endless problems and confusions. As we pointed out last month the form and the method of accounting required by it are both out of date, and take no account of modern considerations. Among the questions put to us this time was whether it was proper to return as "received" a larger sum than that expended, when as a matter of fact the receipts as stated would be strictly accurate. We advised that the better course would be to subtract from the total receipts the sum of money returned to the D.L.P. or the Candidate, as the case may be, so showing the nett amount received for the purpose of the election. The Act requires a statement of

monies received "for the purpose of expenses incurred or to be incurred on account of the election." The Act never contemplated an agent receiving money beyond the expenses actually incurred or "to be incurred" (presumably on account of disputed accounts). For the latter is the only direction in which money ought to be provided to meet future expenses, and it is the only special circumstance contemplated by the Act where the income would exceed the actual expenditure.

A boggle somewhat difficult to understand was that of several inexperienced election agents who wanted to know with what special mark their election return should be marked. The Act, it will be remembered, requires a distinguishing mark to be placed upon the election return which is sworn to. Of course any sort of mark will do. A cross, a figure, a word, a fingerprint, and presumably even a slogan or a caricature would be in order. We remember one election agent, who on an occasion informed us that he intended to mark his paper "Vote Socialist." We do not know whether he did it, but if he did, it would certainly have been a mark which appeared to be in compliance with the requirements of the Act. One of the commonest mistakes of election agents in compiling their returns is to neglect to give sufficient particulars. Thus, it is not sufficient to return a list of Clerks or Messengers, but a statement must be made of the amount of services rendered for the money. Neither is it proper to return under any heading a list which purports to be items of expenditure whether addresses of Committee Rooms or names of articles purchased, without adding the name of the person to whom the money was paid.

Readers will be interested to know that the Ripley Printing Society, Ltd., of Ripley, Derbyshire, whose series of standardised Labour journals are now well known, can claim successes in the following constituencies for whom this firm did the "Election Specials": Ilkeston; Park and Heeley (Sheffield); Attercliffe (Sheffield); Brightside (Sheffield); Whitechapel; West Nottingham, and Rochdale.

(Concluded from page 241)

Pow-wows as we call them in the Folk, to get away from the school atmosphere). The first talks should consist of readings from *The Green Company*, with explanations, so that the new Pioneers thoroughly understand what the Movement aims to do, what their part in it will be, and how they can help it to grow and do its work. The enthusiasm of the children must be worked up and their keen consent obtained for all that the movement aims to do for them.

After the initial stage of explanation the talks must follow a definite programme of education. We suggest that the first winter's talks should base themselves upon *The Story Without End*, which is a simple story book for children based upon social history since feudal times. This does enable the leader to get over simple ideas such as—how the world has changed, what the working-class have gone through in those changes, what's wrong with the world, and what people are trying to do to make it a better place to live in. We recommend this for the first winter since it shows the Pioneers that the movement is *different* in its outlook and ideals from other movements for children.

The leader must, of course, equip himself to add to the material which he will find in *Story Without End* by reading up for himself the history of English socialism and co-operation, and some textbooks upon the industrial revolution, etc. Mark Starr's *A Worker Looks at History* is a useful book for him to begin with.

Next month I will deal with the co-operation of the Pioneers in this programme and then go on to sketch out the manner in which other parts can be tackled.

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ELECTION FIGURES

Our readers will have noticed a strange disparity in the total election figures given by various newspapers. In presenting the following figures for the purposes of record, we make confession that they are not our own calculations. We are indebted to "Labour" for the following tables, which is to say that the Research Department of the Labour Party is responsible for them. No more reliable source could be desired, and our readers may accept the figures given as being entirely accurate.

Growth of Labour Party.

General Election	Seats Contested	Members Returned	Labour Vote
1900	15	2	62,698
1906	50	29	323,195
1910 (Jan.)	78	40	505,690
1910 (Dec.)*	56	42	370,802
1918	361	57	2,244,945
1922	414	142	4,236,733
1923	427	191	4,348,379
1924	514	151	5,487,620
1929	570	287	8,362,594
1931	492†	46	6,330,669
1935	553‡	154	8,325,260§

* Being the second election in one year, fewer candidates were run by all Parties whose polls were all reduced.

† Five candidates were unopposed.

‡ Thirteen candidates were unopposed.

§ Including University contests.

Party Gains and Losses, 1935.

Party gains and losses were as follow:—

Party	Gains	Losses	Net Result
Conservative	3 from Labour	73 to Labour	73 losses
	4 „ Liberals	3 „ National Liberal	
	2 „ Liberal National	2 „ Liberal National	
	—	1 „ I.L.P.	
	9	1 „ Communist	
	—	1 „ National	
		1 „ Independent	
	Total	82	
Liberal Nat.	2 from Conservative	2 to Conservative	8 losses
		8 „ Labour	
	Total	10	
Nat. Labour	1 from National Liberal	6 to Labour	5 losses
National	1 „ Conservative	1 „ Labour	1 gain
	1 „ Independent		
Labour	73 „ Conservative	3 „ Conservative	94 gains
	9 „ National Liberal		
	8 „ Liberal National		
	6 „ National Labour		
	1 „ National		
	—		
	97		
Nat. Liberal	3 from Conservative	9 to Labour	11 losses
		4 „ Conservative	
		1 „ National Labour	
	Total	14	

I.L.P.	1 from Conservative	1 gain
Communist	1 „ Conservative	1 gain
Independent	1 to National	1 loss

Seats Gained and Votes Polled, 1929-35.

The following table shows the number of seats gained and votes polled by the respective Parties at the last three General Elections.

In the calculations for the number of votes polled per candidate and per member, unopposed candidates are excluded:—

Year	Party		No. of Candi- dates	No. of Seats Gained	Percentage of Candi- dates Successful	Number of Votes Polled			
						Total	Per Candidate	Per Member	
1929	Conservative	...	590	260	44.1	8,664,243	14,685	33,324	
	Labour	...	570	287	50.3	8,362,594	14,671	29,138	
	Liberal	...	513	59	11.5	5,300,947	10,333	89,846	
	Communist	...	25	0	—	50,622	2,025	—	
	Other Parties	...	32	9	28.1	260,711	8,147	28,967	
TOTAL			...	1,730	615	35.5	22,639,117	13,086	36,812
1931	Conservative	...	520	471	90.6	11,926,537	25,322	28,262	
	Liberal Nat.	...	41	35	85.4	809,102	23,797	28,987	
	Nat. Liberals	...	112	33	29.5	1,405,102	13,132	50,182	
	Nat. Labour	...	20	13	65.0	343,353	17,168	26,412	
	Labour	...	492	46	9.3	6,330,669	12,994	154,406	
	Unofficial Lab.	...	24	6	25.0	317,354	13,798	63,471	
	Ind. Liberals	...	7	4	57.1	106,106	15,158	26,527	
	Communists	...	26	0	—	74,824	2,878	—	
	New Party	...	24	0	—	36,377	1,516	—	
	Other Parties	...	26	7	26.9	309,980	11,922	44,283	
TOTAL			...	1,292	615	47.6	21,659,404	17,681	35,218
1935	Conservative	...	515	387	75.1	10,488,626	20,366	27,102	
	Liberal Nat.	...	45	33	75.0	866,624	19,259	26,261	
	Nat. Labour	...	20	8	40.0	339,811	16,991	42,476	
	National	...	6	3	50.0	97,271	16,212	32,424	
	Labour	...	553	154	27.8	8,325,260	15,055	54,060	
	Nat. Liberals	...	157	17	10.8	1,377,962	8,140	81,057	
	Ind. Liberals	...	4	4	100.0	65,150	16,288	16,288	
	I.L.P.	...	16	4	25.0	139,517	8,720	34,880	
	Communists	...	2	1	50.0	27,117	13,559	27,117	
	Others	...	30	4	13.3	274,499	9,150	68,625	
TOTAL			...	1,348	615	45.6	22,001,837	16,322	35,775

Women Candidates.

The following figures show the number of women candidates run by the different Parties at the last three General Elections, together with the number of women members:—

Party	1929		1931		1935	
	Nominated	Elected	Nominated	Elected	Nominated	Elected
Conservatives	... 10	3	16	13	19	6
Lib. Nationals	... —	—	1	—	—	—
Nat. Libs.	... 25	1	4	—	10	—
Ind. Liberals	... —	—	1	1	1	1
I.L.P.	... 30	9	30	—	33	1
Labour	... —	—	6	—	1	—
Communists	... 3	—	2	—	—	—
Independents	... 1	1	2	1	1	1
	69	14	62	15	65	9

THOSE TORY CARS

WE CHALLENGE

THEIR LEGALITY

"The Tories had 550 cars and we had about ten spread over the whole of the day."

"We had two cars for the election. The Tories had over 400."

"The Tory agent admitted to having over 400 cars promised beforehand. Each of these he had charged with the responsibility of definitely polling twenty votes. He had other cars. Many of his cars carried far more than twenty voters."

The above are *typical* reports from the election front; and who dare say that the enemy mobilised his biggest army?

From all accounts the Tories at the recent election had in virtually every constituency the biggest fleet of cars which had ever been put in the field. But this bare statement does not convey the whole of the facts; the terrific mobilisation of cars on the Tory side was not only far in excess and more spectacular than on any previous occasion, but it came as a surprise and a revelation in many constituencies. What is more, these huge fleets demand a high degree of organisation, both in their assembly and use; it would be grudging a tribute to deny that in most places the fleet worked well, and did its job.

The question we present is what is Labour going to do about the matter?

It is only three or four General Elections ago when fifty or sixty cars for one candidate was regarded as something to remark upon. In recent years the number of cars has been trebled. There are now millions on the road and thousands of new cars are put into commission every week.

Most of us remember the first occasions when at By-elections the enemy succeeded in mobilising first one hundred and then two hundred cars. This recently went up to three hundred and more. At the last

General Election, in exceptional constituencies, fortunate Tory candidates were able to muster between two and three hundred cars. Four years have gone by and now we get the figures we have quoted for one candidate. What is the record?

Well may one ask what Labour is going to do about the matter. The situation, serious enough in all conscience some years ago, when the Labour Government considered action, has now reached a stage when the inequality between the candidates of the classes and of the masses is simply scandalous.

Probably 350 cars per candidate will be admitted to be a fair average for "National" candidates in the last contest. Let us see what this works out at in cost.

A low estimate of the cost of a day's use of a car will be ten shillings. One cannot hire a car for a day for anything less than double this sum, and though the owner of a car may not at first perceive the whole cost, it is undoubted that the cost for petrol, oil, depreciation and service, averages much nearer to the higher figure.

At ten shillings per car, the fact emerges that at least £175 was thrown into the scales against Labour on the day of the poll in every constituency in which there was a contest.

The amount of money spent on cars by "National" supporters on polling day alone would reach the sum of no less than £100,000.

The handicap is all the greater when one realises that none of this expenditure appears in any election account, and that the cost of polling day cars if added to the general cost of the election, would, in many instances throw the expenditure over the legal maximum.

What we desire to impress upon our readers is not only the enormity of the handicap at the recent election,

but that the situation is growing worse. Not only will still more cars be available next time, but we believe that the enemy has nothing like exhausted the possibilities of use from the present number of owners. The time is definitely in sight, when, even in the largest constituency, every voter who desires to vote Tory can be conveyed to the poll wherever he or she may at the time of polling reside. Not only is the problem of polling wiped out, but the problem of removals.

LABOUR'S TACTICS ARE WRONG !

Labour's feeble attempts to put a competition fleet of cars into the field would be ludicrous, if it was not so pitiable and so tragic for our cause. Five hundred and fifty to ten! Four hundred to two!

Despite the fact that many a poor man now owns a car, that fact is no factor in solving the problem. The poor man cannot afford to run his car for nothing, and what is more he is ordinarily most careful about it, because in addition to pride of ownership, he cannot afford to pay a bill for repairs. There is no likelihood of car owners in the mass swinging their services over to Labour. The handicap therefore will remain—unless?

We must confess that we have found ourselves out of sympathy with the attitude of our own Party towards car usage at elections. We have said in the "Labour Organiser" that we were not happy at our Party professing a general condemnation of the use of cars for fetching-up lazy voters, yet at the same time seeking to imitate our opponents in the matter.

We believe that the Labour Party would have been far better advised in the past never to borrow cars (nor to hire them!) for the purpose of conveying voters to the poll. It should have taken its stand on principle in the matter, and advised the British elector that car usage was an abuse and an impropriety. We believe this self-denying ordinance would have paid.

It seems to us that now is an appropriate time for Labour Agents and Candidates to ask themselves whether a change of policy is not desirable. In one of the instances we have quoted, Labour cars were out-

numbered by fifty to one, and this is no unusual experience. It has happened before; it will probably happen again, only it is probable that the disparity will be even greater. Is it worth while persisting in the pretence of competing with the enemy in this respect, or would not the practice of our own principles prove to greater advantage?

For what is the experience of almost every election where Labour employs a few cars. In almost every contest which we have visited on polling day in recent times, we have discovered our own people frantically crying out for cars, scrambling and jolting and cheating each other to get hold of one out of the handful of vehicles available, and as likely as not using it then in a disadvantageous manner.

WITNESS THE DEMORALISATION

The fact that any cars at all are available becomes a demoralisation to the workers, and is the root cause of a great deal of disorganisation. Voters are led to expect that they will be taken to the poll. They get disappointed, and votes are not polled. Workers wait and wait at the Committee Rooms pining for the cars that never come, and often give up calling on the voters altogether, either out of sheer disappointment or because they dislike to meet electors to tell them after all that no car is available.

These sorts of things did not happen to anything like the present extent in the early days of the Labour Movement, nor in General Elections so recent as 1918, 1922, 1923 and 1924. The fault now entirely lies with the fact that Labour is attempting an unequal competition and it is hopelessly beaten at the game.

We make bold to advise the Movement that its indulgence in car borrowing, besides having the effects mentioned, deprives us of the opportunity of enlisting public sympathy, regarding the inequalities of the contest. We believe that the Party which is bold enough to say that it will not attempt to convey healthy people to the poll, and which decries this attempt to bribe the electors, is assured in advance of a tremendous volume of sympathy. Such sympathy, if suffi-

ently aroused, may well be expressed as an added determination on the part of hundreds of thousands of people to cast their vote. It would not, we believe, lead to a less vote, but to a greater one.

A determination on the part of Labour to act in the manner described might leave the road clear for sufficiently drastic legislation when Labour attains power. Such legislation should in fact be foreshadowed. Labour had little to be proud about regarding its proposals in this matter during the lifetime of the last Labour Government. The proposals then made are given below, but a proposal to supplant that in the Bill was made later as a result of an understanding between the Parties. Under this proposal a large fleet of cars would still be available to wealthy candidates. Labour must make up its mind upon this matter and determine *upon total abolition of the use of conveyances*, except perhaps at public expense in rural areas.

LET US TEST THE ACT

We have often thought that it is a great pity Labour does not make up its mind to challenge the present situation in the Courts. We do not believe the authors of the C.I.P.P.A. ever contemplated that the present position would arise and we believe that the provisions of the Act are sufficiently stringent as they are to end the present situation if the Act is applied.

Turning to Section 7 (1) of the C.I.P.P.A. we read that "no payment or contract for payment shall for the purpose of promoting or procuring the election of a candidate at any election be made on account of the conveyance of electors to or from the poll, whether for the hiring of horses or carriages, or for railway fares or otherwise."

Here is a clear and definite enactment to which there is not even a proviso, except that one reads in Section 28 a sort of permission for persons to disperse out of their own pockets "any small expense" legally incurred, provided such sum is not refunded.

The whole question of the legality of the use of cars on the scale that they are employed to-day depends upon whether or no the expenditure

in respect of them falls within the exemption for "any small expense" which is not refunded.

What is a "small expense"? In the case of many cars what is entailed is a chauffeur's board and lodgings, a garage fee of several shillings and a petrol consumption for the day of not less than ten shillings. (We are speaking of one of the larger cars.) Our computations given above indicate that we believe the average cost per car per day is at least ten shillings. The expenditure in connection with certain cars far exceeds this item.

In addition to this expenditure, which we believe to be mostly illegal, it is the practice of Tory agents to-day to departmentalise the transport, and there is little doubt that certain persons are specifically employed solely to organise and supervise the conveyance of electors to the poll. In respect to the expenditure on cars, at any rate, it would not, we believe, be difficult to secure sufficient facts for a test case. If the case succeeded the terrific disability from which Labour suffers might disappear.

WHAT LABOUR PROPOSED

In discussing the above matter it is interesting to recall that the Labour Government in 1931 brought before the House of Commons a Bill (The Representation of the People No. 2 Bill) which dealt with the question of vehicles.

We quote the section of the Bill below:—

6.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this section, no person shall use any vehicle to which this section applies, or permit any such vehicle to be used, for the purpose of conveying to the poll at a parliamentary election any person other than the owner of the vehicle or a member of his family resident with him.

(2) Any person, being the owner of a vehicle to which this section applies, who is desirous of using that vehicle for the purpose of conveying to the poll persons other than those mentioned in sub-section (1) of this section, may in such manner as may be prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State, register that vehicle with the returning officer of the constituency in which he desires

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to use the vehicle and any vehicles so registered shall be allotted by the returning officer for use in such manner as he, after consultation with the election agents of all the candidates, thinks desirable, having regard to the needs of the several parts of the constituency, with a view to facilitating the conveyance of voters irrespective of party to their polling stations, and any vehicles so allotted may, notwithstanding anything contained in this section, be used for the purposes to which they are allotted.

(3) If any person uses any vehicle, or permits any vehicle to be used in contravention of the provisions of this section, he shall be guilty of an illegal hiring within the meaning of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act, 1883:

Provided that the court before which a person being a candidate or an election agent of a candidate, is convicted under this section may, if they think it just in the special circumstances of the case, mitigate or entirely remit any incapacity imposed by section ten of the said Act.

(4) The vehicles to which this section applies are vehicles intended or adapted for use on roads, other than such vehicles as by virtue of subsection (1) of section fourteen of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act, 1883, may not be used for the conveyance of voters to or from the poll.

AND ANOTHER BAD PROPOSAL

Commenting on the above proposal the "Labour Organiser" in March, 1931, said:—

"This clause restricts the use of vehicles at Parliamentary elections. As the Bill stands there is an extraordinary provision by which persons desirous of lending their vehicles for the conveyance of voters may register such vehicles with the Returning Officer, who is to allot the vehicles as he thinks desirable after consultation with the election agents. Regulations may be made by the Secretary of State governing the manner of registration. "We frankly confess that we hold an extremely poor opinion of this proposal. We believe the scheme proposed is entirely unworkable. But the worst feature of the clause is that

it imposes no penalty on owners or drivers who disappoint or trick the Returning Officer, and no powers are taken to punish any breach of regulations. As the clause stands many ludicrous positions may be imagined, and we cannot conceive that the clause will be passed as printed. We have every reason to believe that some reconsideration is taking place in an endeavour to find a satisfactory solution of the problems involved."

Some of our readers may be aware that prior to the fall of the Labour Government a further development took place in this matter, and proposals were mooted whereby a scale was to be laid down (similar to the scale for the use of Committee Rooms or employment of clerks, etc.) allowing a number of cars per constituency, the number being dependent upon the number of electors. This proposal pleased us even less than the one in the Bill, and would have made permanent the disabilities of which we complain. It is fair to say that the proposal emanated from the Opposition and not from the Government.

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JACK CUTTER

TALKS RURAL and ABOUT THE LOADED DICE

A HINT FOR NEW M.P.'s.

November 14th, 1935. Polling Day in the General Election.

* * *

The scene is the interior of a Labour Committee room in a County Division. A chart on the wall shows there are over 80 polling districts. The Agent sits at his desk amid a mass of papers, looking worried. He looks as if he might be a railwayman who has managed to get two weeks leave from duty, or an insurance agent whose colleagues have agreed to look after his book for a fortnight, or an unemployed man who has been glad of the chance to earn a parody of the statutory fee.

He looks worried because he has just been doing a job he has been trying to do for some days—adding up what he has spent to see if he has exceeded the £200 his committee said he might spend on the election. He is worried because he finds he has gone £5 over the mark and because he is wondering where not only the five pounds is coming from, but also the major part of the two hundred.

It is raining steadily outside and, seeing the steady stream of Tory and Liberal cars passing the window (estimated by his lieutenants to be 350 Tory cars and 200 Liberals), he wonders where his four cars are and whether old Joe's 1925 Cowley has broken down yet as confidently predicted. He looks at the rain and groans, because he knows that this weather will take a thousand or two off his vote. He pictures the temptation offered to the agricultural workers at Slowville-on-the-Ooze, 18 miles away, when confronted with the choice between a four-mile walk in the dark to the polling booth after a hard day grovelling among root crops in heavy soil, and a swift, luxurious ride there and back in a warm car, courteously offered by a smiling lady friend of the Squire's, who will certainly report his refusal. The Agent

knows that the many who will accept the ride will vote Tory because it will be against their code of honour to ride in a man's car and then vote against him before they ride back.

He remembers the glimpses he has had of the Tory Central Committee Rooms as he passed by—ample and well appointed premises, staffed by a small army of paid clerks. He notes that all the hotels in the small town have been full for a fortnight with imported speakers, canvassers and "friends" of the opposing candidates. He knows that the opposition have sub-agents in each district of the division; he knows that on every hoarding in the division a gigantic representation of the benign features of Mr. Baldwin conveys a comforting if meaningless message to all who pass by, dwarfing into insignificance his own few and scattered double-crowns. He knows that next week, when his opponents will be saying: "It's all over," having paid all their huge election bills by the simple process of signing cheques on fat bank balances, he and his colleagues will be meeting to discuss ways and means of raising funds to pay off a bank overdraft which will worry them for months.

And yet . . . With all the dice loaded in his opponents' favour: although they possess every facility that he lacks in the shape of ample finance, transport, publicity and influence, he knows that they are worried too — worried about the strength of the Labour attack and the danger of losing the seat. "They know it is coming," mutters one amateur agent. "If they pull through this time they know it is only the postponement of the day." And his worry vanishes while theirs remains even in the midst of their subsequent rejoicings.

The picture is not overdrawn. There are scores of county constituencies

which have just concluded another battle under just these conditions. We pride ourselves that ours are the fairest and cleanest elections in the world, but in the rural areas where feudalism lingers, Labour starts with a tremendous and unfair handicap as bad as the open graft and racketeering we are told is an ordinary part of many transatlantic election campaigns.

Suppose we *did* start level with our opponents. Suppose the use of election cars was forbidden and aged and infirm voters could vote by proxy; suppose permissible expenditure was reduced to the ample sum of 3d. per head; suppose legal bans were placed on the use of paid canvassers and the employment of local personalities as presiding officers; suppose election offences were made reportable to a County Court and the State bore the cost of any litigation; suppose payment for election work was illegal to all except the Agent and his or her clerk or secretary; suppose advertising were abolished save for the announcement of meetings, the candidates' election addresses and, say, two leaflets per candidate—would anyone suggest that such new rules were anything but just and fair, and does anyone doubt that elections would be all the sweeter and cleaner as a result? Even the "Times," immediately after the election, opened its columns to letters suggesting the abolition of the election car as a subtle kind of bribery and "undue influence."

If such things came to pass there would be very few safe Tory seats in the country, and because the Tories know it there is little hope of any reform until we get that majority. But if any of the new Labour M.P.s are casting about in their minds for a useful subject for a Private Members Bill in the hope that they may be lucky in the Ballot, here is a chance to bring the issue before the House and force the Tories to show how far they favour clean electioneering when it is to their own disadvantage. I am sure I am safe in asserting that this Journal would be very pleased to assist them in drafting a Bill.

Occasionally I meet Dismal Jimmies who tell me in mournful numbers that the spirit of the Movement is "not what it was" when Hardy, Hyndman and Quelch carried the flaming cross. Let them reflect on the spirit of the executives of the Local Labour Parties in the backwoods, who, facing all these

overwhelming odds, are planning their next fight now, while struggling to pay for the last one.

And that, Mr. Editor, looks like my December article, pleasingly devoid, for once, you will say, of wisecracks. For four years now I have been filling my monthly page with discussions on the problems of Borough Parties. During 1936, if you and your readers have no objections, I will endeavour to deal with Rural Parties and County Divisions, for it is written that

"If of Rural wins forsaken,
Labour can't bring home the Bacon."
(Revelations).

Merry Christmas!

(Concluded from page 243)

Then the whole country was to be treated as a single unit or constituency. What of our Divisional Parties, our carefully built organisation, our appointed agents and secretaries, and our constituency formation at a General Election?

Leaflets and literature "of a compelling and vital effectiveness specially written to crystallise a simple practical policy and the great Socialist programme" were to be devised. But the inspired writer is yet unborn, and these star leaflets remain unwritten. One hears the rumbles and the grumbles about those that were.

There was to be a new startling "technique of action"; "action in a bigger dimension"; "one phalanx moving in unison for a mammoth mass conquest"; we were to be "fortified with a strong faith in the purpose of the directive authority" (sounds like Hitler) and "galvanised into persistent and expanding activity and a widespread sense of advancing and dominating strength"; "virility in the parties"; "passion for the cause"; "the dementia of the conquering spirit that triumphs over the impossible"; "mass conversion"; "the cumulative effect"; "a common aim inspired by an attainable vision"; and by 1935 (two years) we were to "have made possible the day of Socialist man" and have left "Capitalist men among the dust-heaps of prehistoric and feudal races."

And then like Mr. Drage's advertisements, it all boiled down to thirty-five bob a month—plus the fag of distributing leaflets. Mr. Croft says we sniffed.

Anyway, now that the failure is world-apparent *may* we take leave to sniff again!

LAW AND PRACTICE

THE ELECTION AGENT

THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

The election is over and the erstwhile mighty and supreme paymaster and marshal of the forces has shrunk to normal proportions—if indeed he has not shrunk so small as to be an object of derision, for even the meanest member of the Party! For that unfortunately is what happens. The election agent is supreme for a little brief while; the pedestal is shaken, and he falls! It is not a nice thought that human nature all too often blames the agent when he loses, and accords the praise to the candidate and the Party when he wins.

Let us here do homage to the agent who night and day during the election stands upon the bridge. True, he is Captain, but is he not also guardian of a great trust, and do not the majority of Labour election agents discharge this trust with honour and credit to themselves and to the Party? We believe so, and even where we have lost it will mostly be found that had the agent's advice been taken long ago quite a different story might have been told to-day.

The object of this article is to examine whence the election agent derives his power and to correct one or two widely held misapprehensions.

A curious thing about the observance of election law is the extent to which many of those who profess to have a smattering of it fly to extremes. There are those who knowing the law well will commit almost every known offence and confess openly to their conduct; others are so timorous that they dare hardly cough during an election!

In this connection we remember a certain candidate who was extraordinarily afraid of incurring any expense which might be deemed improper. He seemed even to be afraid of paying for his own wife's dinner. We remember this candidate taking a number of canvassers into a restaurant and ordering meat tea for the lot. When

it was served he calmly informed the company that everybody must pay for their own, as the law forbade him to "pay anything for anybody!" It was a disappointed band of workers who filed out of that room.

Now the law does *not* prohibit a candidate "from paying anything for anybody." If he feels generous, and his generosity is not a mere election wave, he can extend his generosity at an election in the same way as he would do at any other time. He can pay for luncheons, he can entertain, he can treat, the law merely enjoins that there must be no corrupt motive; but *commonsense* demands that a little more than ordinary care should be exercised regarding *whom* the candidate pays for, and why and wherefor.

But to come back to the election agent. Around him has been built a fetish or taboo that simply won't bear examination. The election agent is by Act of Parliament a mighty man, but he is not all-powerful "before, during or after the election," and some of the rights attributed to him simply do not exist.

The statement is frequently made that the candidate having appointed his agent is entirely in the latter's hands: the agent must order all things, do all things, and pay all things: the candidate must simply grin and bear it.

Now this simply is not true. The election agent is the employee of either the candidate, or those persons who employ him, i.e., the Party, and the agent cannot in law refuse to accept an instruction unless, of course, such instruction is contrary to anything laid down by Statute. Not that we advise too much "instructing the agent"—that is ordinarily the worst possible policy on anybody's part—but we wish it to be clear that occasions do arise when instructions must be given.

It should be understood that the Corrupt Practices Act, which makes the appointment of an election agent compulsory does not lay down a complete schedule of agents' duties, nor give direction as to the terms and conditions of employment. The Act merely directs the agent as to certain things he must do or not do.

It is obvious, that the persons appointing or employing the election agent possess the power to very seriously limit the election agent's discretion through the terms of his appointment or employment. The employers can, as a matter of fact, protect themselves by this means against over-spending by the agent, and we know instances where this is done. Just as a husband possesses the legal right to limit or prohibit the pledging of his credit by his wife (and vice versa) so has a candidate, or the employers of the agent the right to limit liability. If this were not so an utterly ridiculous position would arise. A candidate might be placed at the utter mercy of some unscrupulous agent who choose to pledge the candidate's credit to any amount.

By-the-way, the person who is "named" as election agent is not necessarily named by the candidate. He may be named "on behalf of the candidate." This means that an agent might carry his appointment as election agent from some other person than the candidate, e.g., a Divisional Labour Party can very properly appoint the election agent. Almost invariably, however, the candidate makes the official appointment.

One of the means for redress that may be employed by a candidate for the purposes of dealing with a recalcitrant agent is the revocation of the appointment. The naming of the election agent is not at all final, because the appointment may be revoked, though another agent must be immediately appointed.

One of the most common fallacies concerning the election agent is that he personally, or through his sub-agents, must order all goods, employ every person, and make every contract for goods supplied. This is not so.

Section 27 of the C.I.P.P.A., 1883, lays down that the election agent, or the sub-agent shall appoint "every polling agent or messenger employed for payment" and "hire every Committee Room." It is perfectly legal

for a candidate himself to order printing, stationery, advertising and miscellaneous matters, and to incur expenses in relation to meetings. But again, we wish to make it clear that we are only stating the law. Commonsense dictates that all these things are ordinarily best left to the agent. Divided responsibility spells defeat and often debt.

The fallacy that all orders must be given by the election agent is clearly shown up in Section 27 (2) of the Act which lays down that a contract is not to be enforceable against a candidate unless made by the candidate himself, or by his election agent. Actually some other person than the candidate, or the election agent may order goods and incur no legal ill-consequences, provided that at a later stage the agent is willing to pay the bill. The mere act of ordering is not illegal, but the act of payment would be illegal unless done by the agent.

Some of the fallacies to which we have pointed owe their origin to a very sweeping provision of the Act which lays down that all payments must be made by the election agent. The candidate himself must not pay. Thus, though the candidate has the power to order goods, only the election agent must pay for them. The agent's refusal to do so would not "put the candidate in the cart," because obviously, where a candidate has ordered goods and was prepared to pay for them, no election agent could properly refuse to discharge a bill if given the money and instructed to do so. As pointed out above, the candidate's remedy against a recalcitrant agent would be dismissal and the appointment of another.

Some of the provisions to which we have pointed readily strike one as being unduly restrictive, or as incompatible with modern notions. It is sometimes difficult to accord the practices of a modern democratic Party with the provisions of Acts passed several generations ago in an altogether different atmosphere; but in elucidating these points we do so that wrong notions should not prevail and that sweeping claims sometimes made should be put at their true valuation. As we have many times stated, we consider that the Acts of Parliament governing these sort of matters should be brought up to date.

SETTING THE CHILDREN TO WORK

By LESLIE PAUL

In last month's issue I dealt with the preliminary steps in the formation of a group of Pioneers of The Woodcraft Folk under the wing of the local Labour Party. This month I wish to deal with the indoor programme of the Pioneers once the group is established.

But first let me say that no group in the Folk need function in an isolated manner. Even though there are no other groups in the locality it is still possible to maintain full contact with the movement. It is doubtful as a matter of fact whether any small movement is so well served with publications as ours, for instance.

Here then are a few hints about contacts:—

1. The group must "charter." That is, it must register. This it does by signing the Charter of the Folk. Once chartered it will receive a printed subscriptions register through which it is to keep proper record of the subscriptions and to make quarterly returns of them.

2. It will also immediately receive The Broadsheet, a free monthly news bulletin of the movement which will keep it up to date with decisions made by the National Council, etc.

3. It will also be placed in contact with its area organisation.

4. At the same time the group should introduce *The Pioneer* (the 2d. monthly magazine for children) to the members of the group and place a monthly order for it with Mr. E. Jones, 42, Heatherdene Close, Morden Road, Mitcham, Surrey.

5. The leader of the group should place an order for *The Helper*, a duplicated monthly which will contain material of assistance to him.

6. He will need also in his group library copies of *The Folk Trail* (5s. 4d. post free), *The Green Company* (2s. 3d. or 3s. 10d. post free) and *Story Without End* (8d. post free), from Mr. E. Jones, 42, Heatherdene Close, Morden Road, Mitcham, Surrey. The winter programme which follows is in part based on these books, and they are, in any case, the official textbooks of the movement, without which the leader is lost.

The following suggestions for a winter programme are based on the expectation that a group will meet once a week for a period of not less than two hours and not more than three in a room or hall which is large enough to provide for games for a group of youngsters between twenty and thirty strong.

The first night will be in the nature of a registration night, but the group-leader must take advantage of it to discuss with the children what the group stands for, and what it hopes to do both indoors and outdoors. It is best, by the way, to start off with no more than a dozen children and to work up to the full complement of 25 within a month or so. This will enable the group to absorb the children better.

As soon as practicable after the first night a regular evening programme must be instituted. This should be arranged roughly as follows:—

1. Open with a song or two. (See The Woodcraft Folk Songsheet, 1d., from Mr. E. Jones, address as above).
2. Then a short talk—say 20 minutes, with ten minutes for questions and discussion. The subject of the talks is dealt with below.
3. Fifteen minutes physical exercises—deep breathing, arm swinging, trunk bending, etc., etc., followed by twenty minutes of vigorous games (if accommodation permits, if not, games should be of a quieter kind—guessing games, etc.).
4. Then either charades, or similar dramatic work, or the practice of songs and ceremonies.
5. Handicrafts for the remainder of the time.
6. Occasionally the time allotted for item 4 can be given to handicrafts as well.
7. Part of the evening, about once a month, should be devoted to a meeting of leaders. More about this next month.

I will take space in future issues to describe the various aspects of the evening's programme and how they should be tackled. For this month let me concentrate upon Talks (or

(Continued on page 228)

THE V. FOR S. CAMPAIGN

A Reply by Harold Croft

In your November issue, the Editor pronounces judgment on the Victory for Socialism campaign. In his opinion it appears to have been a failure, to have been based on unsound principles and its methods to have been wrong.

I have felt acute disappointment over the campaign, but I do not agree with the Editor's unmitigated condemnation. The campaign, judged by ordinary standards, was an efficient, stimulating and cumulative effort. It was the largest campaign the Party had ever conducted and there is no doubt it energised a considerable number of parties and ensured a wide nurture of opinion.

In October, 1933, the Editor characterised the "V. for S." campaign as "a programme of meetings and thirty-five bob a month for literature," and sniffed at those "whose dream of a grand and holy crusade had been so boiled down."

To-day he lumps the "V. for S." and the Mass Power scheme as one in effect and consigns them to oblivion.

But while the Editor was officiating at the obsequies, the Mass Power idea was scintillating in another quarter of the Party.

Let me say that the "V. for S." campaign was not in substance the Mass Power Scheme.

The Editor has critical references to the bill-distributing aspect. What of the party that distributed 250,000 leaflets in eighteen months? Members attended on one night and tied the leaflets into bundles of 150 or 200. The director called on Labour families and asked them to do their bit for Socialism by each family delivering one bundle to specified houses. They did it. Month by month by month. And (Mr. Editor), they had 24 days left in each month to do alternative jobs of organisation, membership effort, etc. They wrote to me to say they had increased their vote by nearly sixty per cent. on their 1929 and 1931 figures, whatever the reason.

A converse instance. A party had a pile of leaflets undelivered. "Can't do it they say." And I said, "Oh, you've been asking your busy people to deliver a thousand apiece, eh?" And with downcast expression they said "Yes."

A man came to me and said, "Can't we have speakers' notes about the matter on the leaflets. We are giving them in our villages but we want also to hold impromptu meetings to talk about the messages." He had glimpsed that a bill can be made a psychological force.

In brief, Mr. Editor, leaflets happen to be the cheapest way of getting the Socialist idea to eight million homes. If there are tons of money, then I would suggest posters, newspapers, anything you like, IN ADDITION.

If eight million messages were going out, the national speakers should be talking about the messages and reinforcing them by a resolute tension of will to create power.

But in your article, Mr. Editor, you forget all about the psychology. I put some aspects of the Mass Power idea itself, before one of the top leaders of the movement. He said, "I think you are right, Croft, but I'm afraid our men would not have courage to say it."

An influential agent expressed it thus: "There is no doubt the Mass Power idea is generally acceptable to the parties, but they lack faith in the campaign because it is frozen at the top."

Finally, I will venture my opinion. I believe the Mass Power idea will have to be adopted by the movement. It has never been intellectually challenged. There are no alternatives to it, because it is ordinary principles of policy and activity raised to the "nth" degree. It was a simple vitalisation of the ordinary, to a new dimension, of will, tension and activity, which would catch up all membership in a new togetherness and purpose of achievement.

But there are now outside forces which will compel its operation by the party. The Conservatives learnt a great lesson in 1931. They suddenly realised what reserves of consenting opinion could be translated into votes for them, and the 1935 election shows that they have been consolidating and nurturing this available opinion by their particular mass effort of posters and literature. The Tories do not need to convert, they have only to stimulate latent opinion into ballot box expres-

sion. They can creep up million by million by mass appeal and they will do it. If they want 12-13-14 million votes, they can get them.

On Labour falls the double task of converting opinion and stimulating it to expression. Will the isolated retail activities of local Labour parties cope with this new modern necessity to saturate an electorate with the Socialist idea? No, it will require a "Power" drive and an associated mass effort on the eight million working homes of the country to produce results commensurate with the aspirations of the Labour Movement.

Labour has got to be wholesale in its impress on the electorate. The Mass Power idea does not preclude membership efforts, organisation administrative or electoral, indeed it presages more multifarious success for them.

We are not merely a political party competing with Conservatives for office, we are a Movement to socialise Britain. As Socialists we want the rapid cultivation and emergence of a social democracy in this country.

I am tired of fluttering enthusiasms for "will-o'-the-wisp" victories. We want the "Will for Power" in the Movement. We want to see a calm steadfast determination for a massing up, million by million, of a real Socialist electorate of fifteen millions.

I will conclude by quoting the President of the Agents' Union, "... fight every inch of the way, the Mass Power idea is bound to come, it's got to come."

OUR REJOINER

We are grateful to Mr. Harold Croft for placing before our readers the opposite side of the case we presented in our last issue. But Mr. Croft runs away from our main contentions to talk about and defend the "Mass Power Idea"—a matter we never even mentioned, nor attacked. And the reason for non-mention is the fact that we have no special urge to encourage another phrase which adds to the jargon of the Labour Movement. "Mass Power Socialism" is, after all, nothing new, and it didn't need a title to define it; for Social democracy is fundamental to Labour's Socialism. Nobody in our Party ever thinks of a form of Socialism that would not be the life and the work of the masses.

The Editor's main points of criticism

were that the "V. for S." Campaign was untimely; that it displaced other and more effective work; that it depended mainly on distribution of leaflets, and that this form of literature is not the most effective; that the scheme was costly in relation to its effects; and that the work involved was of a nature least calculated to train the workers for an effective and winning election fight. Mr. Croft devotes himself to but one of these points and mentions one or two instances of successful distribution. Against these, and the personal opinions he presents, we can offer hundreds of criticisms heard at conferences, at Party meetings, and many letters supporting our contentions.

In an endeavour to support his case, Mr. Croft misrepresents a reference to the "V. for S." campaign made in our issue for October, 1933. It might be true that the Editor sniffed, but at what? At that time Mr. Croft was propounding his scheme, and what did he propose?

His first cry and first demand was for "an inspired and directive authority at Headquarters." Who, we ask, and why?

(Continued on page 238)

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